



Tempe Fire Department Safety Tip

Portable Fire Extinguishers for the Home

Used properly, a portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives.

Portable extinguishers for home use, however, are not designed to fight large or spreading fires. Even against small fires, they are useful under only certain conditions.

- The operator must know how to use the extinguisher.
- The extinguisher must be the right type, within easy reach, and in working order, fully charged.
- The operator must have a clear escape route that will not be blocked by fire.
- The extinguisher must be large enough to put out the fire. Most extinguishers discharge completely in as few as 8 to 10 seconds.

There are three basic classes of fires, **Class A**, **Class B**, and **Class C**. All fire extinguishers are labeled using standard symbols for the classes of fires they can put out. A slash through any of the symbols tells you the extinguisher cannot be used on that class of fire. A missing symbol tells you that the extinguisher has not been tested for a given class of fire.

Selecting Your Extinguisher

Class A: Ordinary combustibles such as wood, cloth and paper.

Class B: Flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil and oil-based paint.

Class C: Energized electrical equipment including wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers, machinery and appliances.

The extinguisher must be appropriate for the type of fire being fought. If you use the wrong type of extinguisher, you can endanger yourself and make the fire worse. Multipurpose fire extinguishers, labeled ABC, may be used on all three classes of fire.

Remember the PASS-word

In the midst of a fire emergency is not the time to learn how to use your fire extinguisher. The instructions for use are displayed on the extinguisher. Take time to read over these instructions several times a year to remain familiar with them. While trying to extinguish a fire with your fire extinguisher, always keep your back to an unobstructed exit, stand six to eight feet away from the fire, and remember the **PASS-word.....PULL, AIM, SQUEEZE, and SWEEP!!**

PULL the pin: This unlocks the operating lever and allows you to discharge the extinguisher. Some extinguishers may have other lever-release mechanisms. Check your extinguisher and become familiar with its release mechanism.

AIM low: Point the extinguisher nozzle (or hose) at the base of the fire.

SQUEEZE: Squeeze the lever above the handle. This discharges the extinguishing agent. Releasing the lever will stop the discharge. (Some extinguishers have a button instead of a lever.)

SWEEP: Sweep from side to side, moving carefully toward the fire. Keep the extinguisher aimed at the base of the fire and sweep back and forth until the flames appear to be out.

Fire can re-ignite, so always be sure the fire department inspects the fire site, even if you think the fire is out.

Portable fire extinguishers are also rated for the size of fire they can handle. The larger the numbers, the larger amount of fire that the extinguisher can put out, but also the heavier they become. Make sure you can hold and operate an extinguisher before you buy it.

Remember, a small fire can quickly become a large one. The first step in fighting a fire of any size is to call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number. If the fire is bigger than you are don't try to put it out, go outside immediately!!